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To prevent and treat disease and disability; to promote healthy lifestyles; and to protect and promote the health and quality of our environment.

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Current Seat Belt Law Compromises Safety

Idaho has one of the weakest seat belt laws and the lowest fines in the United States. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for Idahoans ages 5 – 34. Of the 237 motor vehicle occupants killed in 2000, only 68 were wearing seat belts. Studies show that seat belt use is at least 50% effective in preventing death. An additional 85 lives could have been saved if everyone had buckled up.

The National Safety Council ranked Idaho last in its nationwide report card of driver and passenger safety. Right now in Idaho, law enforcement officers can only issue a seat belt citation if the driver has been stopped and cited for another traffic offense. A primary seat belt law would permit law enforcement to cite for not using a seat belt.

Research has shown that strong seat belt laws save lives by encouraging people to buckle up. Canada has a primary seat belt law and a 92 percent seat belt use rate. Canada also has close to half the motor vehicle fatalities of the United States. The United States seat belt use rate is 73 percent while Idaho's is a much lower 59 percent.

Education alone is also not an effective way to increase seat belt use in Idaho. "The state has spent 15 years and hundreds of thousands of dollars trying to teach Idahoans to wear seat belts, but has achieved few positive or lasting results," says Jim Manion, Idaho Division President for AAA.

Dead last is not the place to be. It's time for a change; Idaho deserves a better seat belt law. A primary law along with education will increase seat belt use and save lives.

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